

Important notification on responses to COVID-19 at elementary and junior and senior high schools based on the declaration of a state of emergency in accordance with the Act on Special Measures Concerning Measures against Novel Influenza.

(Notification, January 8, 2021) (Overview)

Each school should utilize the checklist and confirm that the COVID-19 countermeasures are being taken based on the following matters and the "New School Lifestyle — COVID-19 Infection Control Manuals and Guidelines for Schools" (hereafter, Infection Control Manuals)

(https://www.mext.go.jp/content/201203-mxt_kokusai-000011104_0004.pdf),

and school establishers should also check the implementation of the countermeasures at each school and take and provide any necessary measures and support.

1. Continuation of school education activities

- Considering infection situation at schools and characteristics of COVID-19, and from the viewpoint of ensuring healthy learning environments for children and the impact on their physical and mental state, the temporary closure of all schools in a region should be avoided.
- In regards to high schools and special needs schools in regions targeted by the declaration of the state of emergency, schools should increase alertness by introducing staggered school hours, dividing attendance, and so on, depending on the local infection situation.

2. Anti-COVID-19 measures

(1) Thorough monitoring of health

The health of students and faculty should be thoroughly monitored before they come to school. Schools should also monitor the health of students during their school time, and if teachers notice that there are something wrong with their students, they should immediately respond.

(2) Avoid high-infection-risk activities

a. High-infection-risk education activities

- School education activities should be conducted in accordance with the Infection Control Manuals; the following activities should be temporarily suspended in regions targeted by the declaration of a state of emergency.

- ✓ Activities such as group work where students speak in a face-to-face format at close distances for a long period, and activities where students speak all at once in loud voices at close distances. (★)
 - ✓ In science classes, activities that students conduct experiments or observations at close distances.
 - ✓ In music classes, activities that students sing or play musical instruments like recorders, melodicas, etc. at close distances in a classroom. (★)
 - ✓ In art classes, activities that students engage in joint production or appreciation activities at close distances.
 - ✓ In home economics classes, activities that students have cooking training at close distances. (★)
 - ✓ In physical education and health education classes, activities that students exercise in crowds (★) or exercise in contact with each other in close proximity. (★)
- Since the starred (★) activities carry particularly high risks, even in areas outside where targeted for the state of emergency, schools should consider carefully whether such activities can be conducted or not except in the case that there are few infected people and problems with the medical care system. Moreover, even for activities not included in the above activities, other high-risk activities such as activities where students speak in loud voices at close distances, physical contacts, and sports without masks should be appropriately reconsidered in accordance with local infection situation.

b. Physical education

- ① Physical education activities should be conducted outside as much as possible. Indoor physical activities that require heavy breathing should be completely avoided.
- ② In regions targeted by the state of emergency, when students are not at the time exercising (e.g., changing clothes, preparing equipment, etc.), they should wear masks. Moreover, the activities should be done individually as much as possible; activities done in specified small numbers (passing balls, etc.) should have adequate spacing.
- ③ Even for areas outside of targeted regions, PE activities should be carried out with ② above kept in mind as reference.

c. School lunches, faculty dining, etc.

- In order to prevent droplet infections, desks should not face each other, and students should refrain from speaking in loud voices. If it is difficult to take

appropriate distance, measures should be taken such as prohibiting speaking. In addition, students should always wear masks when they are chatting after eating.

(3) Strengthening infection countermeasures for club activities

In areas targeted by the state of emergency, vigilance should be heightened based on the COVID-19 situation, for example, temporarily restricting the holding of practice games or training camps with other schools. Moreover, students should thoroughly refrain from dining together after the club activity.

(4) Cautioning behavior outside of school

In areas targeted by the state of emergency, students should be instructed to refrain from going out of their homes for unnecessary or non-urgent reasons, especially after 20:00. The same instruction should also be made to faculty and staff.

(5) COVID-19 countermeasures at kindergartens

Kindergartens should reconfirm and thoroughly implement countermeasures against COVID-19 with careful reference to this notification and the Infection Control Manuals considering the special situation for young children.

3. Mental care

- Schools need to fully consider the mental health of students by providing support by teachers and counselors when necessary and should announce to students about counseling services (consultation counters opened at each local government) available to them to deal with stress, bullying, prejudice, etc. stemming from COVID-19 infections.

4. high school entrance examination

- Regardless of whether the school is within or outside an area targeted by the state of emergency, the selection of applicants will be conducted according to schedule after all safety measures are taken.
- Depending on local infection situation, schools should consider further countermeasures as necessary, such as how to deal with applicants who have a fever or other symptoms on the day of the entrance examination.

Reference: Checklist for the continuation of school educational activities

- In addition to ascertaining the health condition of students and faculty through health monitoring before going to school, is your school making strong efforts to promptly detect students who show signs of illness after arriving at school and taking prompt responses in coordination with the school nurse?

- For teachers as well, is your school taking measures to make it for teachers to take days off and see a doctor if they are ill?

- Is your school strictly implementing constant ventilation in classrooms (At least once every 30 minutes if difficult, or opening all windows between classes), encouraging students to wear warm clothing, and adopting a flexible policy regarding wearing clothes for cold weather within the school (allowing wearing of coats, winter clothes, mufflers, etc., using of lap blankets, etc.)?

- Are the education activities being carried out based on the Infection Control Manuals?

- If it is necessary to conduct physical education classes inside, is thorough attention being paid, such as the avoidance of exercise that requires heavy breathing?

- Are measures to prevent droplet spray being taken in all dining situations, including for school lunches and box lunches eaten in the classroom and meals for faculty, such as arranging seats and desks not to face each other and refraining from speaking in case that enough distance cannot be kept? Are students thoroughly wearing masks when chatting after meals?

- Are club activities (including before and after the activities) being conducted in accordance with the infection level in each area? Particularly for high schools, are high-risk activities being temporarily restricted in accordance with the COVID-19 infection situation in the region?